

For Immediate Release

Contact: Sheila Dormody, Clean Water Action (401) 331-6972

Clean Water Action Urges EPA to Prevent Mercury Pollution from Power Plants

EPA reports 35% of lake acres and 24% of river miles in the nation are now under fish advisories

Statement by Sheila Dormody, Rhode Island director of Clean Water Action

“The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a summary of information on locally-issued fish advisories and safe-eating guidelines across the nation today. According to their report, in 2003! , 48 states, the District of Columbia and American Samoa issued 3,094 fish advisories, 280 more than the ! previous year. That means that contamination is so severe that people are now warned not to eat fish in 35% of the total lake acres and 24% of the river miles across the nation.

“The EPA’s latest findings come as the Bush administration prepares to finalize a highly controversial proposal to delay until at least 2018 meaningful reductions in mercury emissions from power plants — the largest uncontrolled source of mercury.

“While the increase in mercury advisories does not necessarily indicate an increase in mercury levels, it does show that as more states test their waters, they are finding mercury in their fish. It is time for the EPA to require serious reductions of mercury pollution from power plants.

“The Clean Air Act requires the EPA to set a standard that would achieve the maximum mercury emission reduction capable under current technology. Rhode Island’s neighbors, Connecticut and Massachusetts, have both set strict standards to reduce mercury emissions. We have the technology to reduce power plant mercury emissions by at least 90 percent by 2008.

“The Bush administration’s plan unnecessary delays reductions in mercury pollution from power plants by a decade, and allows six to seven times more mercury into the nation’s air than the Clean Air Act requires. This is an outrageous give-away to polluting power companies, and it will endanger public health for decades to come.

“The EPA has already received a record number of public comments—overwhelmingly in opposition to the plan. Over 500,000 Americans urged the administration to fully enforce the Clean Air Act and stop mercury pollution from power plants.

“New studies from EPA’s scientists in the past year document that the mercury crisis is drastically worse than was realized even a year ago. The EPA now estimates that one in six women of childbearing age in the United States have unsafe mercury levels. This translates into over 630,000 children born—or 84,000 newborns in the Northeast—at

risk from mercury exposure. The Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management calls mercury exposure 'one of the most critical public health threats in our region today.'

"Rhode Island has posted health warnings for mercury for all freshwater bodies in the state, urging young children and pregnant women not to eat any freshwater fish caught in the state. Eating mercury-contaminated fish is the primary way people are exposed to mercury, a highly toxic chemical that can cause learning disabilities, developmental delays, and problems with fine motor coordination in children."

The EPA report is available online at <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish/>

The New England Zero Mercury Campaign annual report card and other reports are available at <http://www.cleanwateraction.org/mercury/reports.html>

Sheila Dormody, Rhode Island director
Clean Water Action
741 Westminster St., Providence RI 02903
p: (401) 331-6972 f: (401) 331-7072
<mailto:sdormody@cleanwater.org>
<http://www.cleanwateraction.org>

This message (including any attachments) is intended only for the use of the person(s) to whom it is addressed, and may contain information that is privileged, confidential and exempt from disclosure under applicable law. If you receive this communication in error, please notify me immediately by e-mail, telephone or fax and delete the original message from your records. Thank you.

(8-24-04)